



Possibility grows here.

Greenbelt Foundation

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Steve Parish

2020 Friend of the Greenbelt Recipient for Municipal Leadership



After 23 years in the position, Steve Parish retired as Mayor of the Town of Ajax in November 2018. Appointed Mayor in December 1995 and re-elected for six consecutive terms, he is the longest serving Mayor in the Town's history.

During his time as Mayor, Mr. Parish played a leadership role in a number of important environmental initiatives. An early proponent of smart growth, he led Ajax Council to adopt an "environment first" Official Plan in 2000. In conjunction with this Plan, Ajax was the first GTHA community to adopt firm urban boundaries thus further restricting sprawl. Mr. Parish championed the adoption of the Province of Ontario's Greenbelt Plan and successfully lobbied to have all of the Town's non-urban lands included in the Greenbelt. He subsequently became one of the Co-Chairs of Municipal Leaders for the Greenbelt, a position he held until his retirement in 2018.

Mr. Parish also championed the important role of cycling in urban health and mobility. Under his leadership, Ajax developed a network of over 120 km of cycling infrastructure. By 2018, Ajax was designated as a Silver level Bicycle Friendly Community. The protection of the Town's Lake Ontario waterfront was a family as well as a civic responsibility. Steve's father, Bill Parish, was a member of the Town's first Council and its third Mayor. In 1959 and under Bill's leadership, the Town adopted its first Official Plan establishing the goal of maintaining all of the Town's waterfront as publicly owned natural park land. During Steve's time as Mayor this goal was completed. Ajax is the only GTHA municipality with a totally publicly owned Lake Ontario waterfront. As part of this initiative the Waterfront Trail was completed across the waterfront which is part of an extensive trail system that extends throughout the town.

Mr. Parish was also a proponent of green energy and infrastructure. During his term, numerous municipal facilities were constructed to LEEDS standards to reduce energy consumption and environmental impacts. Steve Parish holds a BA in History from York University and a law degree from Osgoode Hall Law School. He was called to the Bar of the Province of Ontario in 1978 and practised law in his own firm until he retired from the practise of law in 2006.

Married to his wife Rosemary since 1973, they have three adult children, Jessica, Sarah and Joe, and four granddaughters Madeline, Kenzie, Chloe and Abby. In addition to continuing his passion for cycling and cross-country skiing, Mr. Parish takes an active role with his granddaughters and continues to be involved in a range of environmental issues. He is presently involved in a campaign to protect the headwaters of Carruthers Creek from urbanization and environmental damage.

